



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE 2000 GENERAL PLAN

The City of Costa Mesa 2000 General Plan is the primary source of long-range planning and policy direction intended to guide growth and preserve the quality of life within the community. With a foundation based on citizen's input, the 2000 General Plan serves as the City's vision and expression of its long-term goals. The 2000 General Plan recognizes the community's diverse evolution of residential neighborhoods, its regional commercial influence, and its wide array of cultural, educational, social, and recreational amenities. Implementation of the 2000 General Plan will ensure that future development and improvements are consistent with the City's goals, policies, and objectives.

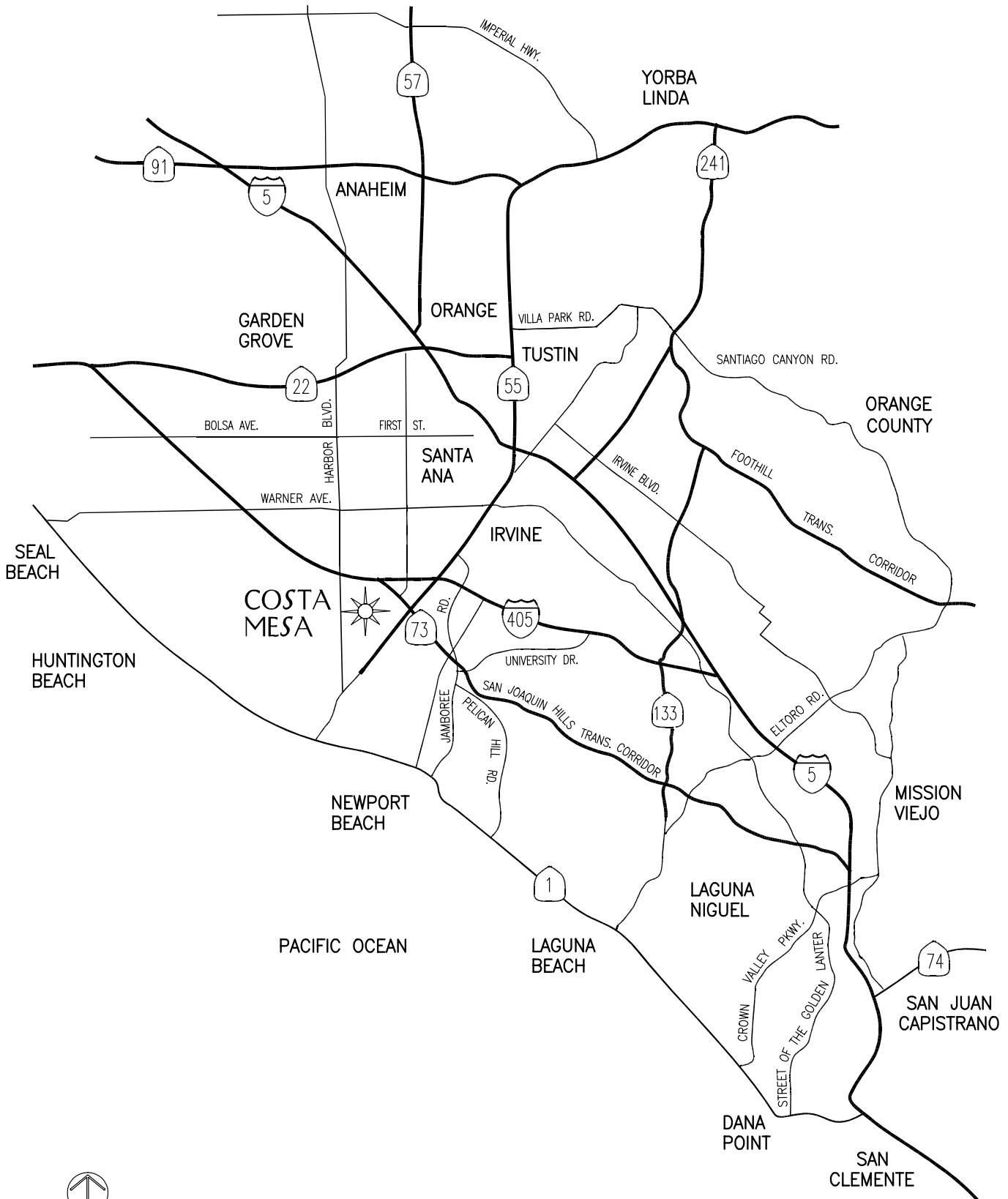
The City adopted its first General Plan in 1957 and its second General Plan in 1970. The Plan was comprehensively amended in 1981 and again in 1992. Since the 1990 General Plan represented several years of public input and community meetings, the City Council decided to update its technical data and format for the creation of this 2000 General Plan (Plan). This Plan represents, for the most part, all of the goals, policies, and objectives set forth in the 1990 General Plan. Outdated goals and programs that have been achieved and completed were deleted from this Costa Mesa 2000 General Plan.

1.1 COMMUNITY PROFILE

LOCATION AND SETTING

Costa Mesa is located in central Orange County, California (refer to Exhibit I-1, *Regional Vicinity*). The City encompasses 16 square miles and is bounded by the cities of Santa Ana, Irvine, Newport Beach, Huntington Beach, and Fountain Valley. Regional access is provided by several freeways including: the San Diego Freeway (I-405) which bisects the northerly portion of the City; the Costa Mesa Freeway (SR-55) which travels north to south through the easterly portion of the City; and the Corona del Mar Freeway (SR-73) which also extends through the northern area of the City. Regional access is also provided by the Orange County John Wayne Airport, located along the eastern edge of the City.

REGIONAL VICINITY



SCALE: N.T.S.

H:\PDATA\10100183\DWG\DLV\GP01-I.DWG 03/05/02 9:51 am

EXHIBIT I-1

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Located on the “coastal tableland” above Newport Bay, Costa Mesa was once grazing grounds for cattle belonging to the Mission San Juan Capistrano. At the beginning of the 19th century, missionaries built an adobe “Estancia” or way-station for the vaqueros who tended the herds. This structure still stands and was restored by the City and transformed into a museum at 1900 Adams Avenue.

In 1810, this same area was a part of the Spanish land grant of Santiago Del Santa Ana made to Jose Antonio Yorba. By 1880, settlers had begun buying portions of the rancho from Yorba's heirs and in the same decade established the town of Fairview. A school house and church were built near the present intersection of Harbor and Adams, and a 25-room hotel accommodated visitors to the nearby hot sulfur springs. But in early 1889, a storm washed out the railroad and brought financial disaster to the community, which soon reverted back to farming.

By this time, the little town of Harper, named after a nearby rancher, had emerged on a siding of the Santa Ana and Newport Railroad. Its first business, Ozmen's General Store, stood on the corner of Newport and 18th Streets and contained the City's first post office, established in 1909. On May 11, 1920, Harper officially changed its name to Costa Mesa, which means “coastal tableland” in Spanish, and continued as an agricultural community: growing sweet potatoes, corn, tomatoes, strawberries, and apples.

Building and oil drilling industries were just beginning to bring new growth to the City when the depression hit southern California. Industries collapsed and the local bank closed. More disaster followed when the 1933 earthquake shook the town, damaging businesses and the Main School.

World War II brought many thousands of people to the area for training at the Santa Ana Army Air Base; located on what is now the Orange County Fairgrounds, Orange Coast College, and the present site of the Civic Center. When the war ended, many returned with their families to begin the population boom, which continues today.

On June 29, 1953, the City was incorporated and the City Council-Manager form of government was chosen. The new City had an area of 3.5 square miles and a population of 16,840. By 2000, the population had risen to 106,237 and the area to 16 square miles.

COSTA MESA TODAY

Today, Costa Mesa is a major commercial and industrial center serving areas beyond Orange County. The dominant industries for the City are trade, services, manufacturing, finance/insurance and real estate. The City is home of South Coast Plaza, known across the country and internationally. The Orange County Fairgrounds hosts the annual county fair each summer in July. Costa Mesa also offers 30 parks, a municipal golf course, 24 public schools, and two libraries.

The City is home to a regional symphony orchestra, and the South Coast Repertory Theater. In 1983, the Orange County Performing Arts Center was established. This center includes a 3,000 seat facility, which was completed in 1985. In 2001, the City of Costa Mesa approved expansion plans for the

Segerstrom Center for Arts. These include the 32,500 square foot expansion of South Coast Repertory Theatre to allow the addition of a new stage, a 1,000-seat expansion of the Orange County Performing Arts Center, the addition of a new 2,500-seat concert hall, and a new art museum.

The City of Costa Mesa is also pursuing the annexation of the many unincorporated islands in the eastside area. The goal of the annexation efforts is to provide a logical jurisdictional boundary with the City of Newport Beach and to simplify the provision of public services to these areas.

The City of Costa Mesa has a total population of 106,237 and is projected to reach 118,762 by 2020. The City has a diverse land use mix, 48 percent of which is designated residential use, 14 percent for commercial use, 13 percent for industrial uses, and 25 percent allocated for public and semi-public uses. In 1998, employment in the City totaled 77,415, with projected employment in 2020 expected to increase to 106,708.

1.2 PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY

The State of California mandates that each jurisdiction prepare and adopt a comprehensive general plan. Government Code Section 65300 et. seq. requires the general plan to address all issues that affect the physical development of the community, as well as land outside its boundaries that potentially affect the City's long-term planning. The role of a general plan is to act as a "constitution" for development, the foundation upon which all land use decisions are based.

All general plans in California must meet minimum requirements, as stipulated in the State Government Code. Each general plan is required to address state-mandated issues as they apply to the particular community. State-mandated issues, more commonly referred to as "elements," include: Land Use; Housing; Circulation; Open Space; Conservation; Noise; and Safety. Each jurisdiction has the authority to include additional elements if the issue is important to the long-term development of the community.

The organization of the general plan is also determined by the local jurisdiction. Most general plans are organized by individual elements. Although the State allows the local jurisdiction the latitude to combine the elements in any order, all elements must be internally consistent and have equal status. Equal status means that each element is equally important, thereby giving the same authority to the Land Use Element as to the Noise or any other element, including any optional elements the local jurisdiction elects to include in their general plan.

The City of Costa Mesa 2000 General Plan contains goals, policies, and plans which are intended to guide land use and development decisions. The 2000 General Plan consists of a Land Use Plan Map and the following 10 elements, which together fulfill the state requirements for a General Plan:

State Mandated Elements:

- ◆ Land Use Element
- ◆ Circulation/Transportation Element
- ◆ Housing Element
- ◆ Conservation Element

Optional Elements:

- ◆ Growth Management Element
- ◆ Community Design Element
- ◆ Historic and Cultural Resources Element

State Mandated Elements - Continued:

- ◆ Noise Element
- ◆ Safety Element
- ◆ Open Space and Recreation Element

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Several supporting documents were produced during the development of the Costa Mesa 2000 General Plan, including the Costa Mesa General Plan Technical Review and the General Plan Program Environmental Impact Report (Program EIR). Other technical reports used in preparing the 2000 General Plan included those for noise, circulation/traffic, and housing. These documents provide substantial background information for the 2000 General Plan.

1.3 OVERVIEW OF THE 2000 GENERAL PLAN

DESCRIPTION OF THE 2000 GENERAL PLAN

The Costa Mesa 2000 General Plan establishes a blueprint for the City's long-term development. The 2000 General Plan's overall intent is to provide a policy framework that strives to maintain and improve a socially-cohesive, economically-viable, and physically-attractive community. The City of Costa Mesa understands that a long-range plan is essential to ensure the citizens' health, safety, and welfare are maintained at exceptional levels in the new century. To this end, the Costa Mesa 2000 General Plan is the document that addresses the issues that potentially impact the quality of life for City residents and businesses.

LAND USE ELEMENT

The Land Use Element serves as the long-range planning guide for development in the City by indicating the location and extent of development to be allowed. More than other elements, the Land Use Element has a major impact on the form and character of Costa Mesa over the next 20 years. Land use policies and land use designations are intended to maintain both an exceptional quality of life for residents and a thriving local economy for business.

CIRCULATION ELEMENT

The Circulation Element establishes a roadway system that adequately accommodates any future growth consistent with the Land Use and Growth Management Elements. Additionally, the Circulation Element includes policies for bike lanes, street improvements, and other transportation issues. A traffic model has been created for forecasting long-range traffic volumes that is compatible with the latest Orange County Transportation Analysis Model (OCTAM).

The Circulation Element also documents the Rapid Transit System in the City, the Master Plan of Bikeways, pedestrian facilities and Air Transportation associated with the Orange County John Wayne Airport.

HOUSING ELEMENT

The Housing Element provides programs and policies that assist the State and region in meeting their goals of providing affordable housing to all socio-economic segments of the population. This element addresses citywide housing and population demographics, regional fair-share housing allocations, and implementation mechanisms to assist the City in providing a full range of housing opportunities.

CONSERVATION ELEMENT

The Conservation Element identifies and establishes the City's official policy relative to the identification, establishment, preservation and management of natural resources in the City. This element focuses on issues pertaining to air quality, biological resources, coastal resources, energy, water resources, wastewater, water quality and waste management for the City. The purpose of this element is to:

- ◆ Identify areas in Costa Mesa with substantial natural resources that require management in order to prevent waste, destruction, or neglect.
- ◆ Identify policies related to permissible uses and development standards within conservation areas, as well as programs to ensure the conservation of resources.
- ◆ Identify desired courses of action/strategies which provide the means to implement the City's conservation policies.

NOISE ELEMENT

The purpose of the Noise Element is to limit the exposure of the community to excessive noise levels. The Noise Element ensures that the City will continue to be a place of safe living, with minimal noise intrusion into residential neighborhoods. The Noise Element identifies and maps current and projected noise levels adjacent to freeways, airports, and railroads. The projected noise levels are used to guide future land use decisions so as to limit noise and its effects on the community. The Noise Element focuses on the location of noise generating land uses in proximity to residential, recreational, and other sensitive land uses, and provide policies to alleviate potential noise impacts.

SAFETY ELEMENT

The Safety Element is a guide for the City Council, government agencies, and individuals to identify and understand potential hazards confronting Costa Mesa. The Safety Element helps to protect the community from natural and man-made hazards. Ultimately, the Safety Element aims at reducing death, injuries, property damage, and economic and social dislocation resulting from these hazards. This element focuses on issues pertaining to geology, hydrology/drainage, fire protection, police protection, and hazardous materials.

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION ELEMENT

The Open Space and Recreation Element outlines a strategy to preserve open space areas in the City and to meet the recreational needs of the residents. Open space in Costa Mesa includes neighborhood and community parks, community centers, open space easements, and golf courses. There are also County-owned regional facilities within and adjacent to the City limits and a large amount of institutional land.

The Open Space and Recreation Element assures the protection of the neighborhood and community park system which serves as the backbone for the community's local open space network. The element references the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan, which was adopted in January 1996.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT ELEMENT

The purpose and intent of this Element is to mandate that growth and development decisions are based upon the City's ability to provide an adequate circulation system. The Growth Management Element is designed to ensure that the planning, management, and implementation of traffic improvements are adequate to meet the current and projected needs of the City.

The Growth Management Element is implemented through various coordinated programs developed to support and carry out its goals and policies. In addition, this element has been designed to minimize duplication between Measure M and Congestion Management Program (CMP) requirements. The Growth Management Element is the most current expression of city growth management policies.

COMMUNITY DESIGN ELEMENT

The purpose of the Community Design Element is to promote quality design for buildings, structures, paths, districts, nodes, landmarks, natural features, and significant landscaping. This element does not entail specific design guidelines, rather it provides policies of sufficient detail to guide the design review process for determining whether or not a project meets the community's expectations for design and development quality.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

The Historic and Cultural Resources Element establishes processes to preserve the City's designated historic resources. The Historic and Cultural Resources Element is designed to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare by providing for the identification, protection, enhancement, perpetuation and use of improvements, buildings, structures, sites, districts, neighborhoods, natural features, and significant permanent landscaping having special historical, archaeological, cultural, architectural, or community value in the City.

ADMINISTERING THE 2000 GENERAL PLAN

It is the intent of the City Council to implement this Plan by establishing annual planning goals based on the Plan, and developing implementing ordinances and regulations. Once adopted, the 2000 General Plan does not remain static. As time goes on, the City may determine that it is necessary to revise portions of the text or add policies or programs to reflect changing circumstances or philosophy.

State law provides direction on how cities can maintain the general plan as a contemporary policy guide. The State requires each planning department to report annually to its City Council on "the status of the plan and progress in its implementation" (§65400[b]). Moreover, it is the policy of the City Council to review the 2000 General Plan periodically so as to maintain the currency of its goals and policies, as well as its background and technical information. The 2000 General Plan has been adopted pursuant to this policy.

1.4 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER DOCUMENTS

The City regulates the use of property within its jurisdiction through the 2000 General Plan in conjunction with zoning, subdivision, and building regulations for the purpose of promoting the health, safety, and welfare of the public. The 2000 General Plan is a legal document that guides development and redevelopment in the City. Other legal documents are also adopted by the City Council and affect development in the City. These documents include the Zoning Ordinance, Specific Plans, and building regulations. The 2000 General Plan is at the apex of all of these land use regulations. Following adoption of the 2000 General Plan, any regulations in zoning, subdivision, building, and other ordinances that are not consistent with the 2000 General Plan will be amended to ensure consistency.

Specific Plans regulate and control the design and improvement of areas which have special development opportunities or constraints. All Specific Plans within the City must remain consistent with the 2000 General Plan and any subsequent General Plan updates.

The Zoning Ordinance is one of the many tools that implement the 2000 General Plan. It is more detailed than the 2000 General Plan and regulates development lot-by-lot, based on the 2000 General Plan's goals, policies, and land use map. The Zoning Ordinance divides the City into districts, or zones, that specify allowable uses for real property, and size restrictions for buildings.